NewsRelease

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Langley Research Center
Hampton, Virginia 23681-0001

Kimberly W. Land
(757) 864-9885

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Exploring the solar system without spreading germs

Exploring other worlds can result in a wealth of discoveries. It can also result in "biological cross-contamination" – germs from outer space – if it's not done right.

NASA's planentary protection officer, John D. Rummel, will discuss NASA's commitment to space exploration and planetary protection at a colloquium at 2 p.m. Tuesday, April 6, at NASA Langley's H.J.E Reid Conference Center.

Media briefing

A media briefing will be held at 1:15 p.m. in the Wythe Room of the Reid Conference Center, 14 Langley Blvd. in Hampton. Media who wish to attend the briefing should contact Kimberly W. Land at (757) 864-9885.

According to Rummel, ongoing and future missions to Mars are particularly of interest not only because of the similarities between Mars and Earth, but also because recent data suggests that there is a high potential for Mars to harbor life under its surface.

He will also explain NASA's planetary protection program and how it has been established to prevent biological cross-contamination during U.S. space missions, and establishes the policies and procedures to achieve that objective.

Rummel, based at NASA Headquarters Washington, D.C., is an associate program scientist with the Gravitational Biology and Ecology Program. He received a doctorate in community ecology and evolution from Stanford University. He led NASA's Exobiology Program to understand the origin, evolution, and distribution of life in the universe. He also led U.S. teams responsible for defining joint exobiology and life support activities with the Soviet Union/Russia.

The general public is invited to the Sigma Series lecture at the Virginia Air and Space Center that evening, at 7:30 p.m.

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